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Prepared by the
DHS Office of
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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

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Homeless man arraigned in rape of child

By SHAUN BYRON
Of The Oakland Press

A homeless man is charged with pulling an 11-year-old girl into an abandoned duplex and raping her in broad daylight as she was on her way to play in a neighborhood park.

The suspect, Kevin Bernard Meredith, 47, had to be separated from prisoners for his own safety after they learned he was facing a charge of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in the little girl's rape.

Meredith was arraigned Monday in 50th District Court and is being held on a \$100,000 cash surety bond.

The girl told officers the incident happened after she left her aunt's house, heading toward a park near the corner of Edison and Chamberlain streets, about a mile north of Woodward Avenue and west of Perry Street.

That's when police say Meredith made his move, grabbing her wrist and pulling her into an abandoned duplex at 82 Edison Street.

It was in an empty bedroom that he raped her, police said.

The girl managed to escape, running back to her aunt's home.

A 9-1-1 call was made and police were dispatched to take a statement on the attack.

The girl gave officers a detailed account of the attack, becoming visibly emotional in describing her accusations against Meredith, police said.

She was then taken to an area hospital to receive medical treatment while officers went to the duplex.

When they arrived at the scene, a woman visiting a neighbor told police she saw Meredith take the girl into the duplex for about five to 10 minutes.

Police first searched the duplex and found the suspect in a rear, first-floor bedroom.

They also discovered he had four warrants for his arrest on misdemeanor charges of failing to appear in court.

After taking Meredith into custody, police said the girl identified him as her attacker and charges of sexual assault were started through the Oakland

County Prosecutor's Office.

A date for a preliminary examination conference hasn't been set.

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Click here to return to story:

http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/052008/loc_20080520226.shtml

Man receives life for CSC

Sean Harkins
Alpena News

POSTED: May 19, 2008

Seventeen years after sexually abusing an eight-year-old girl, an Alpena man was sentenced to life in prison for criminal sexual conduct first degree.

Judge John Kowalski imposed the sentence on 65-year-old Gary Lee Guthrie in 26th Circuit Court on Thursday.

Alpena County Prosecutor Dennis Grenkowitz said Guthrie was the eight-year-old's babysitter in 1991. He said the victim has since been in counseling, where she was encouraged to report the incident to the police.

"By doing so she's protected the community," Grenkowitz said. "I told her 'you've protected some people you'll probably never meet.'"

He said recent legislation removes a statute of limitations from criminal sexual conduct cases, meaning Guthrie could be charged with a 17-year-old crime.

Once he serves 20 years in prison, Guthrie will be up for parole review, but Grenkowitz said he has never heard of a CSC first degree convict receive parole after 20 years.

"As a practical matter, he's going to die in prison," he said.

Guthrie served time in prison from 1981-1986 for a CSC second degree conviction. After he was released, he began babysitting and molesting the victim of the most recent case.

In February, he pleaded guilty to the CSC first degree charge.

Grenkowitz said perpetrators in CSC cases typically have one dysfunction; exhibitionism, sadism, pedophilia, etc.

"This guy seemed to have all of them, I've just never seen anyone like this before ... he's the worst single sex offender I've ever seen. I've never dealt with anyone like him," he said.

Grenkowitz said the victim, who is now 24-years-old, told her mother and a teacher about the sexual abuse, but no charges ever resulted.

He admitted to being inarticulate in justifying the CSC first degree conviction.

"It's difficult to express how wretched a fellow this is without re-opening wounds of the victims from years gone back," Grenkowitz said.

Michael Lamble, Guthrie's defense attorney, declined to comment.

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Niles Daily Star

ONLINE EDITION

[Print Page](#)

New Michigan child safety law takes effect July 1

Tuesday, May 20, 2008 11:03 AM EDT

LANSING - Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has signed legislation that will require the use of approved booster seats for children who are both under eight years old and less than four feet nine inches tall. Current law requires children under age four to ride in a car seat. The new law extends the requirement to include older children who are also not optimally protected by seat belts alone.

The new law will take effect July 1, 2008 and will be a primary enforcement law. This type of law allows officers to stop a driver for that violation alone and issue a ticket for each improperly restrained child. Violators will face a fine of up to \$65.

Proper restraint use is critical since motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Michigan children. Research has shown that the risk of injury for children ages 4-8 is reduced by 59 percent when using a booster seat versus a seat belt alone. Seat belts are designed for adults and don't fit children correctly.

Children in seat belts are 4 times more likely to suffer head/brain injury as compared to those in booster seats.

Michigan joins 43 other states by adopting an expanded child passenger safety law. States that have passed similar laws have seen child restraint use increase dramatically. For more information, go to www.michigansafekids.org.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Forum set for prospective foster parents

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

BY JEFF BARR

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KALAMAZOO -- As the need for foster parents escalates, several local groups will hold "A Taste of Pride" forum for those interested in opening their homes to neglected children.

The event, designed to educate those pondering foster parenthood, will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 31 at Christian Life Center in Kalamazoo. It will begin with the movie "Change of a Lifetime." Current foster parents will be on hand to discuss their experiences.

The preregistration deadline is Wednesday for those requiring lunch or day-care services. Others can register until May 31. Participants can complete that day six of the 12 hours of training required to become a foster parent.

The forum falls on the final day of National Foster Care Month and comes at a time when the need for foster parents has reached "a critical level," according to one local official.

"I don't think people realize the difference they can make in a child's life by bringing them into their home," said Valerie Cunningham, program director for Kalamazoo County Family and Children Services' Child Welfare Program. "These are kids who have lived much of their lives without much hope, without anyone really caring for them.

"Being brought into a loving, stable home offers hope and really can change their lives."

"A Taste of Pride" is being sponsored by the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services, Family and Children Services, Bethany Christian Services, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan and Kalamazoo County 9th Circuit Court -- Family Division.

"This truly is a communitywide need, and I think that's illustrated by how many organizations are part of it," Cunningham said.

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Early Childhood Advocates to Take Lansing by Storm

Over 500 will rally on Capitol Lawn, Call for Increased Investment

LANSING, Mich., May 20 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Over five hundred parents, children and other supporters of early childhood development are expected at the State Capitol on Wednesday, May 21, for the Second Annual Star Power Rally. The rally, sponsored by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC), is intended to recognize champions of early childhood education, care and development and to let state legislators know about the strengths of the Great Start System - Michigan's early childhood initiative.

Key among this year's messages will be how Governor Jennifer Granholm's proposal to increase funding for early childhood development, if passed by the legislature, will impact Michigan families and benefit the state. Her increased investment of \$31.5 million would expand the Great Start Collaboratives to allow all 650, 000 Michigan children under age five to be connected to a Great Start Collaborative, fund important innovation grants to develop evidence-based practices in all early learning environments, and allow an additional 7,000 at-risk children to attend the Great Start Readiness Pre- school Programs. Extensive statistical data and case studies show a return on investment of \$7-\$17 for every \$1 invested by government.

"We are expecting an enthusiastic and record size crowd," ECIC CEO Judy Samelson explained. "We are proud of the hard work occurring at the grassroots level to promote early childhood development. And our local partners are thrilled to have the opportunity to communicate success stories to their elected officials in Lansing."

The day will begin with training sessions to help bring rally participants up to speed on policy issues being debated under the dome and prepare them for visits to legislative offices. Following the training, a rally on the Capitol Steps will take place where early childhood champions Consumers Energy, the United Way, and others will be saluted for their hard work and commitment to early childhood issues. Speakers at the rally will include State Superintendent Mike Flanagan and Speaker of the House Andy Dillon. Later on in the day, rally goers will break off into teams and visit their elected officials to brief them on important early childhood issues.

"We'll call Wednesday a success if we meet with representatives from every legislative office," said Samelson. "It's an ambitious objective, but I know our crowd is up for the task. Their passion for early childhood education will drive them to get it done."

The Great Start initiative was launched in 2004 as a movement to create public understanding that learning begins at birth and that investment in early childhood health, development and learning is crucial to the state's economic future. ECIC was created in 2005 to assure that every young child in Michigan has a Great Start and arrives at the kindergarten door healthy and ready to succeed in school, with parents who are committed to educational achievement.

SOURCE Early Childhood Investment Corporation

Detroit Free Press

May 20, 2008

MACOMB TOWNSHIP: Sheriff weighs charging boy

A distraught 13-year-old Macomb Township boy who disappeared from his home with his parents' gun and ammunition apparently never intended to hurt anyone, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said Monday.

Rather, Hunter Stanek spent the night under a bridge at 16 Mile and Schoenherr and had the .22-caliber revolver with him in case he needed protection.

He also carried a backpack with a change of clothes, a few books, a couple of cell phones and a little food.

"I think he was running away," said Hackel, who is still weighing whether to pursue charges against the boy. "He left a note that said he'd left and that it'd be better if he wasn't there."

Hunter disappeared from his house about 9 p.m. Sunday. He was spotted Monday walking near Duncan Elementary School in Shelby Township. He was taken to the juvenile court so officials could interview him further and decide if he'll face any charges.



Search for teen ends calmly

Boy had gun but didn't threaten anyone, police say

By Norb Franz

Macomb Daily Staff Writer

An overnight search for a distraught 13-year-old Macomb Township boy reported missing along with a handgun ended calmly Monday morning when a school bus driver spotted the teen and drove him to an elementary school.

The boy's mother and stepfather arrived home at 9 p.m. Sunday and discovered the boy, who had been baby-sitting a 4-month-old sibling, had left behind the infant plus a note indicating he was distraught, police said. A .22-caliber revolver and ammunition also were gone from the house, located near 25 Mile and Romeo Plank roads.

The Macomb County Sheriff's Office spent the night contacting the teen's friends and relatives, trying to determine his whereabouts and concerned that he was armed.

Deputies also alerted officials of Utica Community Schools -- the boy attends Shelby Junior High School -- and the Shelby Township Police Department.

After being notified around 4:30 a.m. Monday, district officials summoned their emergency response team to the junior high around 6:15 a.m., district spokeswoman Hildy Corbett said.

With police on school grounds and the whereabouts of the teenager still unknown at the time, the school was placed in "lockdown" mode shortly after 8 a.m. after teachers took attendance of the seventh-, eighth- and ninth-graders and determined the boy was not in the building. The junior high is located on Van Dyke, north of 23 Mile Road.

Shortly after 9 a.m., a Utica Schools bus driver transporting children to Duncan Elementary School spotted the teen walking alone near Hayes and 25 Mile roads.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said the woman recognized the teen, got out of her bus, gave the crying boy a hug and told him she would give him a ride to that school.

The unidentified bus driver contacted a bus dispatcher to report she had found the distraught teen and was on her way to Duncan Elementary. Upon arrival, Shelby police took him into custody for subsequent questioning by sheriff's deputies.

"He had no intention of hurting himself or anyone else," said Hackel, who

declined to specify what was troubling the boy. "He's very distraught, upset."

The Macomb Township teen told investigators he took the gun from the home "for his own protection" from animals he might encounter outdoors, the sheriff said. The boy slept under a bridge on Schoenherr, near 26 Mile Road, and in the morning he changed into clothes he had also put in a backpack.

Inside the backpack, police recovered the loaded pistol and ammunition that he had taken from his home. He also had two cellular phones that were not activated, police said.

The teen was taken to Macomb County Juvenile Court for further questioning.

Hackel said the bus driver was not notified the boy was believed to be carrying a gun.

Corbett, the Utica Community Schools spokeswoman, said police told district representatives they suspected he had a gun but that he had not threatened anyone.

She agreed that it did not appear the bus driver was notified that the teen, who attends seventh grade at Shelby Junior High School, might have had a pistol. The number of elementary school-aged children on the bus at the time was not immediately known.

Corbett emphasized there was no indication the boy might harm anyone but acknowledged the district Monday afternoon continued to review its handling of the situation.

"We always try to debrief and see how to make it work better the next time," she said. "We've never had this particular situation before."

Letters from the district explaining the incident were expected to be sent home to parents of students attending Shelby Junior High School and Duncan Elementary School.

During the search, sheriff's officials also contacted U.S. Border Patrol because the teen had resided in Canada but did not have his passport with him. Police also asked that an Amber Alert be issued, but that request was denied because there was no evidence the boy was abducted.

Reserve deputies were preparing to search for the boy via helicopter at the time he was found.

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/052008/loc_local02.shtml



Food stamp cases rising countywide

Families seeking help to pay for basic needs

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

By RoNeisha Mullen

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GENESEE COUNTY - The number of families receiving food stamps in Genesee County has risen 5.6 percent in the past year to the second-highest rate in the state.

Now, about one in every five families in Genesee County receives food stamp benefits - delivered in the form of a bridge card, a debit card that food stamp benefits are credited to each month.

The county saw an increase of 0.69 percent, or 268 more families, who received food stamp benefits from March to April this year, according to the state Department of Human Services' Web site.

Since 2003, cases statewide have increased 53 percent.

Rafael Mojica, who works for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, said more than half of the clients he deals with receive DHS assistance. He blames the job market.

"The root of the problem is that there are very few jobs in the city," Mojica said. "People struggle to get minimum-wage service industry jobs."

ACORN assists people in dealing with utility companies and finding agencies that will help them pay utility bills. Mojica said that for some, DHS assistance is not enough.

"People are seeking help from agencies on top of DHS assistance," Mojica said. "And with that extra help, they're still struggling to get their basic needs."

Aaron Ruff's family is one of 38,447 in the county who received food stamps in April. Ruff, who lives in Fenton, said his family began receiving food stamps in February after he was laid off from his job as a machinist. He and his wife, Crystal, also unemployed, have two children and are expecting another.

Ruff said that without food stamps, he's not sure how he'd feed his family.

"We're not living very well, but we have something to eat," Ruff said.

The couple receives \$350 a month in food stamps. Ruff, 30, said the benefits are gone before the end of the month.

"We try to shop inexpensively and buy cheaper food," Ruff said. "But gas prices are so high, we're forced to shop at stores nearby, and they're usually more expensive."

QUICK TAKE

Applying for assistance

- Need help paying for food but not sure you qualify for food stamp benefits? Visit any state Department of Human Services office or go to www.michigan.gov/dhs for more information.

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More getting food aid

Food stamp cases are on the rise in Genesee County. Here's a look at the numbers of area families getting benefits:

April 2007:

36,268

March 2008: 38,179

April 2008: 38,447

Counties compared

Here are numbers of food stamp cases for April 2008 in a sampling of Michigan counties:

County Families

Wayne 174,712

Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for DHS, said the economy is partly the blame.

"The Michigan economy has been soft for a considerable amount of time," Sorbet said. "A lot more people are losing their jobs and taking lower-paying jobs that make them eligible for food stamps."

Sorbet said Michigan has one of the highest participation rates in the nation for the government assistance programs.

"According to the federal government, 75 percent of people who should receive assistance are receiving assistance in Michigan," she said.

In 2007, about \$1.4 billion was dispersed in food stamp benefits statewide. Almost \$94 million of that total was dispersed to Genesee County residents.

LaShawn Stewart of Genesee Township said she's definitely not receiving her fair share.

"I have five kids, and they give me \$58 (in food stamps) a month," said Stewart, a certified nurse's assistant. "I know other people that get \$200 and \$300, and they have less kids," she added.

Stewart said she's been receiving food stamps off and on for several years, at times receiving as little as \$42.

Genesee 38,447
Oakland 34,455
Kent 32,743
Macomb 32,026
Saginaw 16,655
Shiawasee 4,185
Livingston 3,295
Lapeer 3,259
Tuscola 3,009
Source: Michigan Department of Human Services

"That little bit does help, but it doesn't buy much." Stewart said, adding that she uses some of her own money for groceries. "We don't starve. I budget, and we make it work."

Tony Beavers, co-owner of Great Giant Supermarket in Genesee Township, said about half of his customers pay for their groceries with a bridge card.

"Business more than doubles the first 10 days of the month (when food stamp benefits are distributed)," Beavers said. "Toward the end of the month, things dry up. Maybe the (food stamps) run out or something, but business does slow down then."

Bill Kerr, president of the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, said many people who run out of food stamps at the end of the month are turning to food banks to make up the difference.

"Our agencies are requesting more and taking more," Kerr said. "They're serving more families than before."

The food bank supplies smaller local agencies and pantries with food. The smaller agencies then distribute the food to individuals.

Kerr said that last year, the food bank, which serves 22 counties in Eastern Michigan, distributed 17.8 millions pounds of food, an increase of more than 1.5 million pounds from 2006.

"As food costs and costs in general continue to rise, people have to make decisions when it comes to basic needs," Kerr said. "And with food costs escalating, the money budgeted for food goes toward even less than it did just days before."

Monday, May 19, 2008

News

Inspection fees could burden nonprofits



Argus-Press Photo by Anthony Cepak Donald W. Elkins of Owosso enjoys his breakfast at St. John's United Church of Christ in Owosso Saturday morning. New or increased inspection fees could threaten food programs such as the one at St. John's church.

By DOMINIC ADAMS Argus-Press Staff Writer
Monday, May 19, 2008 4:11 PM EDT

OWOSSO - The smell of coffee brewing and a hot breakfast cooking floats down a small flight of stairs and lingers in the air outside St. John's United Church of Christ.

It's Saturday morning and inside dozens of hungry people sit around tables asking each other about their families and daily lives. The weekly tradition provides patrons a full belly, fellowship and a sack lunch for the road.

But new or increased inspection and licensing fees threaten such programs.

"That's the way they look at us, as thieves and beggars. We're just common ordinary people," said Donald W. Elkins, who gets a hot meal and sack lunch from the church each week. "It's not that we're not capable of getting work - there is no work."

The Food Law of 2000 intended to allow county health departments to charge school districts for cafeteria inspections.

But when the law took effect this year, Shiawassee County officials said it could no longer waive food inspection and licensing fees for nonprofit, non-revenue-producing organizations.

Shiawassee County Health Department Director George Pichette said food inspections will generate about \$63,000 in 2008.

Non-profits only account for between \$7,000 and \$8,000 of the revenue generated from inspections.

"It's an insignificant amount from the standpoint of revenue," Pichette said.

He said the cost of all inspections done by the health department increases about 3 percent each year.

County officials said attorneys told them it is illegal to waive or reduce fees for non-profit, non-revenue producing entities.

"The legal opinions clearly state that you have to charge all your users the same fee," Pichette said. "Our costs are the same to operate whether we are inspecting a restaurant or a nonprofit."

St. John's Pastor John Downing said he was told the inspection done by the health department would cost \$351. He also said it would cost \$250 for a license to use his church's kitchen.

Downing said he has not received a bill. Last year the church occasionally paid \$10 for a temporary license fee when it had a food event for profit.

"I agree with the county that anyone that serves food to the public should have clean, workable facilities," Downing said. "The change in the law in Michigan and the county's interpretation of that law is very likely going to put a financial burden on many not-for-profits."

The Salvation Army in Owosso provides about 120 meals per week to those in need, but after receiving a bill for a 30-minute inspection, director Matthew Rowland was surprised.

"In the past, we were considered exempt so when we got a bill for \$329 we were trying to figure out why," he said. "It was something we could handle, but we would have used that to purchase food."

Rowland also said he didn't understand why other Salvation Army operations paid less. Inspections at separate facilities in Wayne County cost \$31 and \$1, Rowland said.

He said inspections at other Salvation Army operations cost \$75 in Monroe County, \$150 in Bay County and \$245 in Lenawee County.

Pichette said the health department's funding from the state and county levels is decreasing.

He said when nonprofit, nonrevenue groups were exempt the county gave away its resources.

"We're in a cost squeeze and in some way we have to be careful to recover our cost," Pichette said. "The county hasn't been helping us. The state hasn't been helping us. Fees are one way we have been recouping that."

Pichette will discuss the health department's fee structure at 4 p.m. Wednesday during the board of county commissioners health and human services committee meeting.

County Commissioner Jack Johnson said he is upset the county Board of Commissioners has not taken action.

Although Rep. Dick Ball, R-Owosso, said an amendment to the Food Law is in committee, Johnson predicted the legislature will leave the it alone.

"This is exhausting for me. Most of the counties in the state don't (charge nonprofits for food inspections)," said Johnson, D-District 3. "They're passing it off saying Representative Ball is going to take care of this. That's a tactic that's always used. The next thing you know it's been a year and the flame has died."

Commissioners decided May 7 during their Committee of the Whole meeting to postpone indefinitely a motion that would give it the discretion to waive certain organizations' fees.

Downing said his church's worship is feeding the hungry and Shiawassee County officials are prohibiting his members' free worship.

"I'm very annoyed that our county commissioners and county prosecutor have passed the buck so to say. They told us that they had no choice but to charge these fees because it was the law," Downing said. "What they have not acknowledged is yes there is a law, but they have the power to say what those fees are."

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